

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 379

CG 021 060

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TITLE Drug Use Survey of University of Kansas Students.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Students; Comparative Analysis; *Drug Use;
Higher Education; Incidence; *Marijuana
IDENTIFIERS University of Kansas

ABSTRACT

A survey of drug use (excluding alcohol use) within the University of Kansas student body was conducted during the spring semester of 1987. The purpose of the survey was to establish baseline information on various drug use issues among the student body that could be used for comparative and programmatic purposes. The 11-item survey was mailed to a random sample of 1,000 undergraduate and graduate/law students. Data were received from 554 students covering topics of frequencies of use of various drugs, current drug use rates, onset of use, and perceived primary sources of assistance. The results suggest that 261 students or 47% of the respondents had never used drugs other than alcohol, and that the vast majority of respondents had never used the drugs listed on the survey with the exception of marijuana. Other findings suggest that the high school years have the highest frequency of initial drug use. Responses to an item asking respondents to indicate the one primary source to which they would turn if they felt they had a drug problem suggest that the decision to use university psychological services is likely to come only after students have attempted to cope with the problem themselves or with the aid of a close friend or relative. (Results are compared to results from surveys conducted at the University of Michigan and the University of Virginia. The survey instrument is included.) (NB)

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DRUG USE SURVEY OF UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS STUDENTS

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University of Kansas

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ABSTRACT

An 11 item drug use survey was mailed to a random sample of 1000 University of Kansas undergraduate and graduate/law students during the Spring, 1987 semester. Excluded from the survey were special, non-degree seeking students and survey items pertaining to the use of alcohol. Data were received from 554 students (55.4% return) covering topics of frequencies of use of various drugs, current drug use rates, onset of use, and perceived primary sources of assistance. Descriptive data on these topics are presented and discussed. Selected comparisons are made to the University of Michigan's large scale survey and University of Virginia's survey of drug use among college students. A copy of the survey is attached.

Beside being an illegal activity, drug use is generally a private activity, thus making it difficult to estimate the extent to which it occurs. Moreover, there is particular concern over the use of drugs by students and young adults since these groups tend to show one of the highest rates of use (Chaney & Farris, 1987). Although there has been one large scale study of illicit drug use among college students (Johnston, O'Malley, & Bachman 1986), a recent report by Chaney and Farris (1987) indicates that only about 10% of the 546 higher education institutions surveyed have conducted drug use surveys among their student population. While 26% of these institutions report an intention to conduct a survey in the near future, it would appear that relatively little local campus information has been collected or published.

With the support of the Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of Kansas, the Research Committee of the Division of Student Affairs conducted a survey of drug use (excluding alcohol use) within the University of Kansas student body during the Spring semester of 1987. Since campus alcohol use was a topic of specific interest, a survey devoted exclusively to it was conducted in the Spring of 1988. The major purpose of the survey was to establish base-line information on various drug use issues among the student body that could be used for comparative and programmatic purposes. The drug use questionnaire was designed, in certain respects, after an instrument used in a University of Virginia study (Todd, 1986).

METHOD

A random sample of 1000 students was drawn in the Spring semester 1987. A cover letter, survey form, and return envelope were mailed to each student with a short return date. The returns created a data set of 554 complete returns (55.4% return rate). No follow-up efforts were made to increase the sample size. Excluded from the sample were special, non-degree seeking students and students on the medical center campus in Kansas City. Table 1 contains various comparative demographic data on the sample and total student body.

Table 1
Sample and Population Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Sample		Student Body	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Freshmen	127	22.9	4788	21.3
Sophomore	81	14.6	4181	18.6
Juniors	90	16.2	3842	17.1
Seniors	85	15.3	4595	20.5
5th Yr UG	36	6.5	321	1.4
Grad./Law	135	24.4	4725	21.0
Total	554		22,452	
Males	255	46.0	11589	51.6
Females	299	54.0	10867	48.4
Living Arrangement				
Residence/ Scholarship Hall		28.8		36.9
Greek		9.9		7.3
University owned apartment		4.3		1.6
Off-campus		57.0		54.3

The demographic characteristics of the sample population closely resembled that of the overall University student population. Sophomores, seniors, and males are underrepresented in the sample by approximately 5%, while females and 5th year undergraduates are overrepresented by about 5%. The sample had a median age of 21 years, with a range of 18-64.

RESULTS

DATA ON DRUG USE

According to the instructions given on the survey form, if a student had never used or experimented with drugs other than alcohol, they need not complete the remainder of the survey. The remaining items on the survey contained several items pertaining to various aspects of their drug use. It was assumed that those students not responding to these items were those who had never used or experimented with drugs other than alcohol. Approximately 47% (261 students) did not complete this part of the survey, and this figure is used in this report as the estimate of non-users and experimenters in the student body. In consideration of the sample size from which this statistic was observed, one can be 95% confident that the population "non-use rate" is within 4.2 percentage points of the observed sample value.

Item 6 on the survey asked students to indicate the relative frequency of use of various drugs. The item asked each student to respond to each of the 10 drug categories with one of six frequency categories. Although most students followed this instruction, a small percentage of respondents did not respond

to all drug items. Consequently, it was assumed that " no response " means that they had neither experimented with nor used that drug. This item, unlike item 7, was intended to elicit a portrait of students' total experience of drug use including both past and current use. In contrast, item 7 focused exclusively on current use. Table 2 contains the percentages of students reporting having had experience with each of the various categories of drugs.

Table 2
Percent of Students Who Have Used Various Drugs (N=554)

Drug	No Response	Never used	Once or twice	Once a month	2-3 times/ month	More than once a week	More than once a day
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Amphet's- Stimulants	1.4	75.9	16.8	1.6	2.5	1.3	0.4
Cocaine	1.6	80.3	13.7	2.4	0.9	0.7	0.4
Depress- ants	1.4	91.1	5.1	1.3	0.5	0.5	0
MDMA	1.4	92.2	5.2	0.9	0.2	0	0
Halluc- inogens	1.6	84.3	11.2	2.0	0.4	0.4	0.2
Heroin	1.4	97.5	0.9	0	0	0	0.2
Mariju./ Hashish	0.5	49.0	26.7	8.9	6.9	5.1	2.9
Tranqui- lizers	1.3	90.6	4.9	2.0	0.4	0.7	0.2
PCP	1.6	96.4	1.8	0.2	0	0	0
Other	8.1	87.5	1.4	0.4	0.4	1.3	0.9

The results in Table 2 indicates that, except for marijuana, the vast majority of students had never used the drugs listed on this survey. In the case of marijuana approximately 50% indicated never having tried the drug, while an additional 27% report having used it only once or twice. Although not presented in the above table, the pattern of use for males and females was very similar across drug and frequency categories. The pattern of variation typically was 1-2% and did not consistently favor either sex. The only apparent differences that might be significant were that males showed a 6% higher experimentation rate (i.e. once or twice) with cocaine, while females had a 6% higher experimentation rate with marijuana. These kinds of patterns are not congruent with the higher use pattern for males that was found in the University of Michigan survey.

The data in Table 2 were obtained from a survey item that did not place any constraints on respondents with regard to when they had used the drugs. To obtain information on the current pattern of drug use, item 7 asked students to indicate which, if any, of the surveyed drugs they were currently using. The item did not ask them to indicate the frequency of use. The results presented in Table 3 show the percentage of current use for each sex and for the total group. The percentage for each sex refers to the percent of the sample of males or females currently using drugs.

Table 3
Incidence of Current Drug Use

Drug	Male (n=255)		Female (n=299)		Total (n=554)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Amphetamines/ Stimulants	6	2.4	11	3.7	17	3.1
Cocaine/Crack	6	2.4	5	1.7	11	2.0
Depressants	2	.7	5	1.7	7	1.3
MDMA	2	.7	1	.3	3	.5
Hallucinogens	5	2.0	3	1.0	8	1.4
Heroin	2	.7	0	0	2	.4
Marijuana/ Hashish	32	12.5	46	15.4	78	14.1
Tranquilizers	4	1.5	7	2.3	11	2.0
PCP	1	.4	0	0	1	.2
Other	7	2.7	7	2.3	14	2.5
Total	67	26.2	85	28.4	152	27.4
Adjusted Total*	57	22.4	71	23.7	128	23.1

* Adjusted for students who report using multiple drugs (n=24). The overall percent of current use in this sample is 23.1%.

To put the results in Table 3 in a larger perspective, certain data extracts were taken from the survey conducted by the University of Michigan (Johnston, et al., 1986). The extracts were taken from a summary published in the July 16, 1986 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education. While in a strict technical sense it involves a certain extrapolation to make these

comparisons, since the data sets are not identical, they are sufficiently similar to allow reasonable comparisons.

The University of Michigan's study reported the proportion of college students who used drugs during each of several yearly periods. Table 4 presents the Michigan data for the 1985 year along with the data on Kansas students who are currently using drugs (see Table 3). Thus, in an approximate sense, we are trying to compare data on yearly use. This extrapolation is based on the assumption that Kansas students who report current use have used those drugs for the past year.

Table 4
Comparative Current Use Rates

Drug	U.of Michigan Data (1985)	U.of Kansas Data (1987)
Marijuana	41.7%	14.1%
Hallucinogens	3.0%*	1.4%
Cocaine	17.3%	2.0%
Stimulants	11.9%	3.1%
Sedatives/ Depressants	2.5%	1.3%
Tranquilizers	3.5%	2.0%
Heroin	0.2%	0.4%

* LSD is the only hallucinogen reported.

Compared to the University of Michigan's survey, University of Kansas students appear to use virtually all of the drugs to a lesser extent than what the Michigan data indicate in that

study's college samples. This is especially the case with marijuana, cocaine, and stimulants; and it is of particular interest since these three classes of drugs impact appreciable proportions of people in their late teens and twenties (Johnston et al., 1986).

ONSET OF DRUG USE

Item 10 of the present survey asked students to indicate the period of time during which they started to use drugs. Table 5 contains the results regarding the onset of drug use for both University of Kansas and University of Virginia students.

Table 5
Onset of Drug Use

Time Period	U. of Kansas (N=242)	U. of Virginia* (N=185)
University	28.9% (58)	40.0% (74)
High School	59.1% (143)	45.4% (84)
Jr. High	13.2% (32)	14.6% (27)
Elementary School	2.9% (7)	---
Between School and College	4% (1)	---
Post-Graduate	.4% (1)	---
Omitted responses	17.4% (51)	14.4% (31)

* Todd, S.R. (1986). The University of Virginia Student Drug Survey-June 1986. Unpublished manuscript.

The data on both samples of students should be viewed with some caution as a reasonably high percentage of students in

both samples did not respond to this survey item. However, there is a distinct pattern suggesting that the high school years is the time period having the highest frequency of initial drug use. These results are comparable to the University of Michigan study which indicated that of those who have used drugs about 61% have tried an illicit drug by their senior year in high school. It is concluded that the onset or initial use of drugs clearly begins, for the majority of students, before they come to college.

Regarding the University of Kansas data on onset of use, a subsequent analysis was made of the 58 students who started using drugs in college as to when in that time period drug use was initiated. It was found that 32 (55%) began as freshmen, 14 (24%) as sophomores, 6 (10%) as juniors, 5 (8.6%) as seniors, and 1 as a graduate student.

LENGTH OF USE

Item 9 asked students to indicate how long they had been using drugs. Out of the 293 potential respondents, 123 (42%) failed to offer any response to this item. The reason(s) for this high omission rate is not known. Since the data on this issue are unreliable, hence invalid, the results are not reported.

SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE

Item 11 asked students to indicate the one primary source to which they would turn to if they felt they had a drug problem. Out of the 293 potential respondents, there were 34 students who omitted a response and 38 students who offered multiple responses. This left a total of 221 students who responded

according to directions (e.g. designating one primary source). Since the purpose of the item was to identify a single primary source of help, the data on the 221 students is presented in Table 6 along with comparative data from the University of Virginia.

Table 6
Primary Sources of Assistance

Source	U. of Kansas (N=221)	U. of Virginia (N=184)
Friends	31.2% (69)	39.3% (68)
Parents	17.6% (39)	9.2% (16)
Counseling Center	14.9% (33)	28.9% (50)
Girl/Boyfriend	12.7% (28)	16.2% (28)
Local Referral Agency	6.3% (14)	5.8% (10)
Student Health Staff	2.3% (5)	12.7% (22)
Clergy	1.4% (3)	5.8% (10)
Faculty	0.0 (0)	.6% (1)
Residence Hall Staff	0.0% (0)	4.6% (8)
Other	13.6% (30)	----
Multiple Responses	13.0% (38)	----
Omitted Responses	11.6% (34)	14.4% (31)*

* This percentage is assumed since the Virginia data do not report multiple responses. It is based on 185 responses out of the 216 Virginia students reporting to have used drugs.

The results suggest two conclusions: (1) people who are close to students are seen as the most primary sources of help by students at both universities, and (2) the perceptions of certain university resources (e.g. mental health or student health facilities) as primary sources of assistance will show variation between institutions. With respect to the latter point, the results would indicate a reasonable difference in students'

perceptions between the two institutions.

DISCUSSION

When a survey is made of an illegal activity, irrespective of guarantees of anonymity, it is very probable that some drug users will not respond. Further, the format of this survey required those who were using drugs to answer more survey items than those students who had never tried drugs. In short, it took more effort for subjects to complete the survey if they had used drugs. Although there is no evidence demonstrating the influence of these factors, it is likely that the frequency data on drug use are underestimated. Further, underestimation is also likely in this sample as the proportion of males responding was approximately 5% less than the percentage of males in the total student body. If, as previous reports have indicated, there is a higher frequency of use among males, and if that pattern holds for Kansas students, there would be an error of underestimation in the drug use data.

It was rather surprising to find the discrepancies in current use rates between the figures from this survey and that presented in the University of Michigan survey. It was impossible to account for this on the basis of sample characteristics as insufficient sample and sampling information is reported in Michigan's technical report. Differences in region, sampling procedures, and survey techniques could have contributed to the discrepancies. In this regard, it would seem important to note

that care should be taken in comparing any individual institutional data with the Michigan study.

The results on the onset of drug use are much clearer and consistent with other studies. The initial use of drugs begins, for the majority of college students, by the end of the high school years. The data suggest that preventative efforts should begin before the high school years, if they are to have any chance of succeeding. This is not to suggest that efforts should not continue during the college years in that the Kansas data indicates that a sizeable number begin during the freshman year; but this finding strongly supports the concept of starting preventative efforts early.

The results on perceived sources of assistance is consistent with the typical finding that the decision to use university psychological services is likely to come only after students have attempted to cope with the problem themselves or with the aid of a close friend or relative (Farber & Geller, 1977). With this perspective in mind, it would be reasonable to say on the basis of the Kansas and Virginia data (see Table 6) that certain university resources are viewed as important resources, but not primary ones. These comparative results would also suggest that there are differences between institutions in students' perceptions of university services. This appears to be an issue that could be addressed by institutions.

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UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

STUDENT OPINION SURVEY

The Student Opinion Survey was created by the Division of Student Affairs to collect reliable information on University of Kansas students — their needs, attitudes, and interests. After surveying a random sample of students, results are given to student groups, faculty and administration to assist them with rational decision-making. It is hoped that at least two such surveys may be conducted each school year.

This Student Opinion Survey is on Drug Use. We are defining drugs as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, stimulants, tranquilizers, and other similar substances not prescribed to you by a physician. Alcohol use is not included for the purposes of this questionnaire.

This survey is strictly anonymous, confidential, and voluntary. Please, DO NOT write your name on the questionnaire. Do be aware that the sample of students receiving this questionnaire was carefully selected to be representative of the students at KU and that for the results to be valid and useful, returns are needed from every selected student. Please return the completed questionnaire in the stamped, self-addressed envelope by March 1, 1987.

For each item, please use the space to the left for your answer.

Part I.

1. I am a:
☐ (1) freshman
☐ (2) sophomore
☐ (3) junior
☐ (4) senior
☐ (5) fifth year undergraduate
☐ (6) graduate/law
2. I am a:
☐ (1) male
☐ (2) female
3. My age is _____
4. I live in:
☐ (1) a residence hall/scholarship hall
☐ (2) a fraternity/sorority
☐ (3) a university owned apartment (Jayhawker Towers, Stouffer Place, Sunflower Apartments)
☐ (4) off-campus housing
5. In your opinion, what is the amount of drug use at KU? (Check the most descriptive.)
☐ (1) practically nonexistent
☐ (2) moderately light
☐ (3) moderately heavy
☐ (4) a great deal of drug use

IF YOU HAVE NEVER USED OR EXPERIMENTED WITH DRUGS OTHER THAN ALCOHOL, YOU DO NOT NEED TO COMPLETE THE REMAINDER OF THIS SURVEY. PLEASE RETURN THE SURVEY IN THE STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE.

IF YOU HAVE USED OR ARE CURRENTLY USING DRUGS WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR RESPONSES TO ITEMS 6 THROUGH 11.

Part II.

6. This question refers to use of various drugs. Using the key below place the letters in the blank space indicating how often you have used each drug.

Key

- A. Never
- B. Experimented with it once or twice
- C. About once a month
- D. 2 or 3 times a month
- E. More than once a week
- F. More than once a day

- ☐ (1) amphetamines and stimulants (uppers, speed)
- ☐ (2) cocaine/crack
- ☐ (3) depressants or sleeping pills (downers, reds, ludes, yellow jackets, phenobarb, etc.)
- ☐ (4) MDMA (Ecstasy, XTC)
- ☐ (5) hallucinogens (LSD, mushrooms, psilocybin, peyote, mescaline)
- ☐ (6) heroin (China white, smack)
- ☐ (7) marijuana/hashish
- ☐ (8) tranquilizers (Valium, Librium, etc.)
- ☐ (9) PCP (angel dust)
- ☐ (10) other (please specify) _____

7. Please mark the space to the left with an X for any drug you are currently using.

- ☐ (1) amphetamines and stimulants (uppers, speed)
- ☐ (2) cocaine/crack
- ☐ (3) depressants or sleeping pills (downers, reds, ludes, yellow jackets, phenobarb, etc.)
- ☐ (4) MDMA (Ecstasy, XTC)
- ☐ (5) hallucinogens (LSD, mushrooms, psilocybin, peyote, mescaline)
- ☐ (6) heroin (China white, smack)
- ☐ (7) marijuana/hashish
- ☐ (8) tranquilizers (Valium, Librium, etc.)
- ☐ (9) PCP (angel dust)
- ☐ (10) other (please specify) _____

8. Have you ever talked to a professional in any of the following settings about your drug use? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ (1) KU Counseling Center (Bailey Hall)
- ☐ (2) KU Mental Health Clinic (Watkins Hospital)
- ☐ (3) KU Psychological Clinic (Fraser Hall)
- ☐ (4) Bert Nash Mental Health Clinic (off Campus)
- ☐ (5) a non-Lawrence clinic
- ☐ (6) a private physician or counselor
- ☐ (7) other _____

9. How long have you been using drugs?

- ☐ (1) less than 6 months
- ☐ (2) between 6 and 12 months
- ☐ (3) between one and two years
- ☐ (4) longer than two years

10. When did you start using drugs?

- ☐ (1) Elementary school
- ☐ (2) Junior High school
- ☐ (3) High School
- ☐ (4) University _____ year

11. If you felt you had a drug problem, who would be the primary person you would turn to for help? (check one)

- ☐ (1) Counseling Center Staff
- ☐ (2) Student Health Staff
- ☐ (3) Faculty member
- ☐ (4) Friends
- ☐ (5) Girl/Boyfriend
- ☐ (6) Local Referral Agency
- ☐ (7) Parents
- ☐ (8) Priest, Minister, or Rabbi
- ☐ (9) Residence Hall Staff
- ☐ (10) other _____

Please return the completed questionnaire in the stamped, self-addressed envelope by March 1, 1987.